

An Open Letter:

Over the past two years people have asked why I have not spoken out to defend myself more vigorously against some of the false and salacious allegations leveled at me. It is a fair question and the answer is deeply personal. Despite my desire to set the record straight and confront the individuals making false allegations, I wanted nothing less than to create more headlines my kids would read and a new gathering of photographers at the end of our driveway. So I decided to just stay quiet and work on repairing my relationship with the people I love. It has been the most important full-time job I have ever had.

But my silence has been a mistake.

Today, nearly two years after I was fired by NBC, old stories are being recycled, titillating details are being added, and a dangerous and defamatory new allegation is being made. All are being spread as part of a promotional effort to sell a book. It's outrageous. So, after not speaking out to protect my children, it is now with their full support I say "enough."

In a new book, it is alleged that an extramarital, but consensual, sexual encounter I have previously admitted having, was in fact an assault. It is categorically false, ignores the facts, and defies common sense.

I had an extramarital affair with Brooke Nevils in 2014. It began when she came to my hotel room very late one night in Sochi, Russia. We engaged in a variety of sexual acts. We performed oral sex on each other, we had vaginal sex, and we had anal sex. Each act was mutual and completely consensual.

The story Brooke tells is filled with false details intended only to create the impression this was an abusive encounter. Nothing could be further from the truth. There was absolutely nothing aggressive about that encounter. Brooke did not do or say anything to object. She certainly did not cry. She was a fully enthusiastic and willing partner. At no time did she behave in a way that made it appear she was incapable of consent. She seemed to know exactly what she wanted to do. The only concern she expressed was that someone might see her leaving my room. She embraced me at the door as she left.

This encounter, which she now falsely claims was an assault, was the beginning of our affair. It was the first of many sexual encounters between us over the next several months. After we returned to New York, we both communicated by text and by phone. We met for drinks, and she met me at my apartment on multiple occasions to continue our affair. Our meetings were arranged mutually. At no time, during or after her multiple visits to my apartment, did she express in words or actions any discomfort with being there, or with our affair.

She also went out of her way to see me several times in my dressing room at work, and on one of those occasions we had a sexual encounter. It showed terrible judgment on my part, but it was completely mutual and consensual.

Brooke now says that she was terrified about the control I had over her career and felt pressure to agree to our encounters after Sochi. But at no time during our relationship did Brooke work for me, the Today Show, or NBC News. She worked for Meredith Vieira (who had not worked for the Today Show in several years) in a completely different part of the network, and I had no role in reviewing Brooke's work.

I admit, I ended the affair poorly. I simply stopped communicating with her. Brooke continued to reach out. She admitted to NBC at the time she filed her complaint that she called me late at night while I was home with my family in an effort to rekindle the affair. But I attempted to go back to my life and pretend as if nothing had happened. I understand how that must have made her feel. However, being upset or having second thoughts does not give anyone the right to make false accusations years later about an affair in which they fully and willingly participated.

Between February 2014 and November 2017, Brooke and I saw each other more than a dozen times at professional gatherings, both large and small. Despite the fact that our affair was over, she always went out of her way to greet me warmly and engage in conversation. It was not until I was called in to speak to an NBC attorney on November 28, 2017 that I first learned Brooke had any complaint. I answered all questions openly and honestly for more than an hour. At that meeting I was *never* told that Brooke claimed our encounter in Sochi was non-consensual. Had I been, I would have defended myself immediately.

After Brooke filed her complaint in late 2017, her attorney publicly insisted she wanted to remain anonymous. He said she just wanted NBC to "do the right thing." But within a year she was reportedly out trying to sell a book. And it appears that she also sought a monetary payment from NBC. Now she is making outrageous and false accusations to help sell a different book and stepping into the spotlight to cause as much damage as she can.

But Brooke's story is filled with contradictions. Which Brooke is to be believed?

- She claims our first encounter was an assault, yet she actively participated in arranging future meetings and met me at my apartment on multiple occasions to continue the affair.
- She says I was the one pursuing the relationship, yet once it was over, she was the one calling me asking to rekindle it.
- She says she felt pressure to continue the affair because I had control over her career, but she did not work for me, the Today Show, or NBC News.
- She said she wanted to remain anonymous, yet she was reportedly trying to sell a book within year after filing her complaint.
- She said she just wanted NBC to "do the right thing," yet she sought a monetary payment, and two years after I was fired, she is stepping forward to do more damage.

There are people who fully understand the actual dynamic that existed between Brooke and me. They have reluctantly and quietly reached out in the past two years and shared what they know. They have accurately described Brooke and her role in this affair. I hope those people will

understand that these allegations cross a serious line, and what they can share is a vital truth, even if it may seem unpopular.

Because of my infidelity, I have brought more pain and embarrassment to my family than most people can ever begin to understand. They've been through hell. I have asked for their forgiveness, taken responsibility for what I *did* do wrong, and accepted the consequences. But by not speaking out I also emboldened those who continue to do me harm with false stories.

One such story I should have confronted a long time ago is an example of why I believe my silence was a mistake. Despite numerous erroneous reports in the past, there was *not* a button in my office that could lock the door from the inside. There was no such locking mechanism. It didn't exist. NBC confirmed this fact publicly following my termination.

It would have been impossible to confine anyone in my office, for any purpose, and I have never attempted to make anyone feel as if they were confined in my office. I have never assaulted anyone or forced anyone to have sex. Period.

Anyone who knows me will tell you I am a very private person. I had no desire to write this, but I had no choice. The details I have written about here open deep wounds for my family. But they also lead to the truth. For two years, the women with whom I had extramarital relationships have abandoned shared responsibility, and instead, shielded themselves from blame behind false allegations. They have avoided having to look a boyfriend, husband, or a child in the eye and say, "I cheated." They have done enormous damage in the process. And I will no longer provide them the shelter of my silence.

Matt Lauer